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The C. I. O.

Labor's New Challenge

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by Will Herberg

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THE C. I. O.—LABOR'S NEW CHALLENGE

I.

The New Situation in the Labor Movement and the Rise of the C. I. O.

C. I. O. DEMANDS UNION RECOGNITION BY GENERAL MOTORS — Other Auto Concerns and Steel Next, Says Lewis. . . ."

"A.F.L. CHIEFS CALL FOR REOPENING OF G. M. PLANTS
Craft Union Heads Condemn Strike and Union as 'Outlaw'.
..."

Reading such headlines as these in the daily press, the intelligent worker must feel a mixture of jubilation and bewilderment. Jubilation that at last organized labor has recovered its spirit and is able to talk back to the employers in the only language they can understand — the language of conscious power; bewilderment that, in the labor movement, allegedly responsible people can be found who are so lost to all sense of solidarity and common decency that they will openly give aid and comfort to the bosses against their own fellow-workers! And the same strange contradiction meets us on every sector of the labor front today — the militant elements driving forward to achieve security and recognition for labor while a handful of old-line leaders seem ready to stoop to anything in order to preserve what they regard as their traditional privileges. At the moment, the trade union movement is torn wide open with this conflict. How did it all come about? What are the forces involved? What is the outlook for the future and what can we do to help the movement emerge from this crisis stronger and more firmly united?

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These are some of the questions that confront every worker today.

In the ten or twelve years before 1933, the trade union movement of this country seemed to be content with merely vegetating — not really living or growing or fighting, but just vegetating. It appeared to be satisfied to drag out its existence in the same old rut, its membership restricted to relatively small groups of skilled or semi-skilled craftsmen, its influence limited largely to certain "sheltered" positions in the industrial system where the methods of modern mass production had not yet penetrated or had not yet made particular headway. Of course, there were exceptions, such as the United Mine Workers, which did have its roots in a basic industry, but, on the whole, it is a fact that the great masses of workers in the big industries were not in union ranks; indeed, organized labor was hardly more than an island in a vast sea of company unionism and the open shop.

And how could the great masses of the workers find their way into the trade union movement when most of the unions were organized along strictly craft lines, with no place whatever for the vast majority of working men and women who possessed no particular craft skill? The structure of industry was no longer then what it had been in the days when the A. F. of L. was founded. Large-scale mass production methods had gained undisputed sway over the most important and basic industries of the country; old-line craft skills no longer played the role they once had; the working class had fundamentally changed in composition and character. In the auto industry, for example, as Henry Ford points out, nearly 80% of the jobs had come to require less than one week's training and only 1% a training of over a year. In other basic industries, in steel, chemical, rubber and electrical appliance production particularly, things were just about the same. Yet the official leadership of the labor movement refused to face the facts; self-satisfied in their stagnation, they blindly clung to their old and discredited methods, to their long out-of-date system of organization.

In 1933 came the showdown. Under the spur of the hopes aroused by Section 7a of the NRA — and of the illusions

too, for illusions also have their power! — labor surged forward with inspiring force. The ice began to break at last. The ideas of unionism and collective bargaining seized hold of millions of workers who had been indifferent or even hostile before. But what happened? Craft unionism very soon showed that it had long outlived its usefulness as the standard system of organization. The old-line craft unions hardly profited by the great upsurge of labor. The industrial and semi-industrial unions, on the other hand, such as the United Mine Workers, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, grew rapidly, increasing their membership very considerably, in some cases even two or three times over, and strengthening their power and influence even more. At the same time, plant unions and federal locals began to spring up everywhere, embracing the production workers in the big plants, mills and factories. Not only did the craft unions show themselves incapable of growing but, in many cases, they became a serious obstacle to organization because of the "dog-in-the-manger" attitude they adopted. They had their charters, their jurisdictions; what matter if they could not or would not organize ninety percent of the workers in the field — nobody else would be allowed to do it! No doubt about it — craft unionism was definitely blocking the advance of labor; it had to give way to a more modern organizational strategy if trade unionism was to make any progress at all.

The same thing became clear also from another angle. Labor had made great gains on many fronts in 1933 and 1934, but could these gains be preserved, not to say extended, simply by standing still? Could the plant unions in the rubber mills or automobile plants possibly maintain themselves unless they were fused into strong industrial unions? What chance could the U.M.W.A. have to retain control over its own industry while steel remained open shop or company union? In other words, as long as the basic industries of the country continued unorganized, the trade union movement could not feel itself secure anywhere. No longer was it possible for labor to drift along in the same old rut: it would either have to make a vigorous effort to organize the great mass-produc-

tion industries or else give up hope of surviving under the new conditions. But common sense and long experience had plainly shown that the mass-production industries could be organized only on an industrial basis, for only along such lines could the workers be kept united and a place be found for the millions of unskilled and semi-skilled in the plants and mills. It thus became a question of industrial organization or no organization at all, a choice between life and death — life through adaptation to new conditions and death through clinging to old and outworn forms and methods!

So things stood in 1935. No wonder, then, that the A. F. of L. convention of that year, held at Atlantic City, was so significant. The attitude the convention would take to the central problem facing it would certainly go a long way towards determining the future of the whole labor movement. Business and government had already readjusted themselves to modern industrial conditions — the former through trusts and monopolies, the latter through the New Deal. Could organized labor now meet the test?

The convention showed that decisive sections of the A. F. of L. were able to face the facts. In their ranks were naturally to be found unions already industrial or semi-industrial in structure, organizations directly or indirectly associated with mass-production industries and the progressive elements generally. The United Mine Workers was there and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the International Typographical Union; together they formed the backbone of the new progressive wing, with Lewis as its spokesman. They did not make extravagant demands. They denied any desire to interfere with the jurisdiction of established craft unions; they simply called upon the A. F. of L. leadership to carry out the mandates of previous conventions by granting full industrial charters to unions in the leading mass-production industries. This was the least that could be expected of the annual congress of American labor but this the Atlantic City convention refused to do! For the gathering was dominated by old-line craft unionists who were unable to read the signs of the times and unwilling to give up their narrow craft privileges in the

interests of labor as a whole. Yet one thing was accomplished; it proved possible to bring about an effective discussion of the industrial union issue at Atlantic City and to consolidate a minority group wielding nearly 40% of the vote. It was at Atlantic City, in fact, that the newly crystallized tendencies in the labor movement first came into open clash — dramatized in the historical punch in the jaw that John L. Lewis administered to William Hutcheson, a blow that was truly heard around the world!

The forces that had united at the convention in defense of industrial unionism felt that the issue was of such vital importance to the labor movement that it was not enough simply to argue about it; something had to be done to organize the mass-production industries while there was still time. Immediately after the convention, therefore, in November 1935, eight international unions banded together to form the Committee for Industrial Organization, with the double purpose of carrying on an educational campaign for industrial unionism and of stimulating and encouraging the actual organization of the basic mass-production industries along industrial lines. The craft union chiefs, headed by John P. Frey of the metal trades department, Arthur Wharton of the machinists and William Hutcheson of the carpenters, could see in this step nothing but a challenge to what they regarded as their vested interests. Using their control of the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. as a weapon, they launched a bitter, reckless crusade against the C.I.O. for its "crime" of trying to bring the labor movement into line with modern industrial conditions. Warnings, threats and ultimatums followed one another until finally, on September 5, 1936, two months before the annual convention, ten unions connected with the C.I.O., embracing over a million members, were summarily "suspended" from the A. F. of L. after a farcical trial, and were barred from the coming convention! The "right" to perpetrate this outrageous piece of despotism the Executive Council very considerably granted to itself by special resolution! Clearly enough, in their mad course of rule or ruin, the bitter-enders on the Executive Council were determined to stop at nothing, not even at disrupting the whole trade union movement!

Meanwhile the C.I.O. went right ahead, pushing organization in the mass-production industries, bringing the message of industrial unionism to the workers of the land. The splendid work it has already done in the steel organization campaign and in the struggles of the auto, rubber and glass workers, is the best testimonial to the services it has hitherto rendered to the labor movement as a whole. The spirited response of the auto workers in the great strike at General Motors is an especially gratifying indication of the power and appeal of the C.I.O.

The Tampa convention of the A. F. of L., in November 1936, was a horrible example of what the rule of the reactionary Frey-Wharton-Hutcheson clique really means and to what excesses these people are ready to go to perpetuate their hold on the federation so as to preserve the craft privileges upon which they depend. In stark contrast to the Atlantic City gathering, this convention marked positively the lowest point ever reached in the whole half-century of existence of the A. F. of L. Not one effort, not one gesture even, was made to advance the cause of organized labor; every official act of the convention was directed towards hamstringing and disorganizing the labor movement. This is the plain, unvarnished truth!

In a larger sense, it was not even a convention of the whole labor movement. It was really a rump convention, for from it were excluded, arbitrarily and illegally, ten international unions embracing over a million members and representing the more advanced, progressive and forward-looking elements in the federation. This original outrage cast its deadly blight upon the whole convention. By their fruits shall you know them! Let us see what came out of the gathering at Tampa:

A resolution to condemn the seamen's strike then under way in the Atlantic and Gulf ports.

A decision to "outlaw" the union label of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers which produces practically all of the union-made clothes for men and boys in the country.

Contemptible slurs and insinuations against the so-called "Jewish" unions and the Negro trade unionists.

Action to confirm and continue the illegal suspension of the C. I. O. unions. That these unions were not expelled outright was due not so much to the last-minute repentance of the craft union chiefs as to their hope of scoring a strategical advantage. In his daily news report on the convention, Chester Wright well pointed out that "the difference is minor and technical. For all practical purposes, the continuance of suspension would be the equivalent of expulsion. It would also place upon the C.I.O. the responsibility for the final break."

Constitutional changes making for the destruction of the autonomous rights of international unions and the transformation of the A. F. of L. from a voluntary federation of independent unions into a bureaucratically centralized organization, by giving the Executive Council the right at its own good pleasure to suspend any affiliated body and then bar it from future conventions.

A series of decisions to curb drastically the powers and functions of city and state labor bodies and federal unions to the point of virtual paralysis.

At Tampa, President Green gave characteristic expression to the blind and reactionary philosophy of those who today dominate the Executive Council. Speaking before the convention of the building trades department, this one-time apostle of industrial unionism proclaimed: "As long as there are the building trades unions there will be an A. F. of L." Does Brother Green really believe that an American federation of labor is at all possible if it ignores the basic industries of the country and contents itself, in stupid self-satisfaction, with a few craft unions in the building trades? How long does Brother Green think these very craft unions themselves could continue to exist if the open shop and the company union are allowed to dominate big industry unchallenged? Truly, those whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad!

II.

The C. I. O., the A. F. of L. and the Future of the Labor Movement

THE CLEAVAGE in the labor movement has been immeasurably aggravated as a result of the Tampa convention. All the vaporous peace talk, all the soothing promises, all the speculations on the "conciliatory" elements in the Executive Council, have melted into thin air because there was no substance to them in the first place. What has long been clear to the thoughtful observer has now become apparent to all — that the conflict is no mere clash of individual personalities, no mere outburst of factional antagonism or political intrigue, but the direct expression of profound industrial changes and the reaction of organized labor to them.

More than amiable good-will and a pleasing personality is necessary to heal the deep breach in labor's ranks. Peace and unity are naturally essential to the effectiveness of the labor movement, but they can be achieved only on a sound basis, only a basis that will permit the movement to fulfill the tasks upon which its very existence depends. Very properly does Justice, official journal of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, emphasize that:

"there is more than a desire for peace that is involved in this dispute. . . . There are involved in it fundamental concepts of trade union organization, methods and tactics. Such basic differences cannot be glossed over or shunted aside. . . . A peace which would leave such fundamental issues out of consideration cannot be lasting or beneficial to either side." (December, 1936.)

What are these fundamental issues upon which such sharp differences have arisen and which must be settled in

order to reestablish unity in the trade union movement? At bottom, they are two:

1. **Industrial unionism as the form of organization in the great mass-production industries of the country.** All the pious generalities about the "importance" of organizing the mass-production industries and all the fervid promises to do so, amount to just nothing at all if industrial unionism is rejected as the basis for such efforts at organization.

2. **Genuine democracy in the trade union movement.** How can a movement claim the allegiance of the working masses if its leadership arbitrarily arrogates to itself such despotic power that it claims the right to suspend affiliated organizations and then bar them from subsequent conventions so as to prevent them from even presenting their own case before the parliament of labor? Methods of self-perpetuating bureaucracy are intolerable and can never be the basis for a sound labor movement.

It was because the leadership of the Executive Council obstinately refused to sanction the organization of the mass-production industries along industrial lines and then virtually abolished all channels of democratic procedure in the A. F. of L. so as to bolster up their hopeless position, that the breach in labor's ranks first arose. Today this breach can be healed only if the reactionary craft union chiefs come to realize how vain it is for them to try to stem the march of progress, how futile it is for them to attempt to force horse-and-buggy forms of unionism upon labor in an age of streamlined trains, airplanes and radios! The responsibility rests squarely on the shoulders of the Executive Council!

Nothing could be more short-sighted than the attempt made in some quarters to label the C.I.O. with the brand of dualism. Dualism always aims at undermining and destroying the existing labor organizations, at splitting them in order to found a new, "pure", "spick and span" labor movement. But the fundamental aim of the C.I.O. is just the opposite—to strengthen and extend the existing labor movement, to organize hundreds of thousands of additional workers into its ranks by the utilization of new methods and forms — with the aid and consent of the official leaders of the A. F. of

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L., if possible, but against their objections and resistance if necessary. Let it be remembered that, before Lewis set up the Steel Workers Organizing Committee as subsidiary to the C.I.O., he had repeatedly appealed — in vain — to the Executive Council to undertake, or at least help with the job of spreading unionism to America's biggest industry.

Nor can anyone fail to see how fundamentally different the C.I.O. is from past breakaway movements in the A. F. of L., with which some do not hesitate to compare it. Neither the Socialist Labor Party's Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance (1895) nor the Communist Party's Trade Union Unity League (1929) was set up because conditions in the labor movement demanded a new departure of such a character; conditions in the labor movement had very little to do with it, as a matter of fact. These dualistic organizations were brought into being simply and solely for political and party reasons — party policy demanded the new departure and it came. De Leon's curious adventures with the Knights of Labor and the A. F. of L. before he launched his Alliance are well known and we may still remember how the T.U.U.L. was born out of the sharp "left turn" in the policy of the Communist International. At bottom, therefore, both were inherently artificial creations, having no connection whatever with American reality or roots in American conditions. They came into existence and functioned entirely as party auxiliaries, in fact, as the trade union departments of the political parties in question.

Surely it is unnecessary to emphasize the profound difference between the C.I.O. and these adventures in dual unionism. If any historical analogies are wanted, let them be sought in the circumstances under which the American Federation of Labor arose and established itself as the main stream of the labor movement. Fifty years ago, the outstanding organization of the American workers was the Knights of Labor. It was a powerful movement embracing hundreds of thousands of wage workers in its ranks. Yet in a comparatively short time it was but a memory, completely superseded by a new organization. Why? Because it was founded upon a philosophy and a program that might have corresponded to conditions long past but were certainly no

longer in harmony with the situation in which labor found itself in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The K. of L. was a "miscellaneous", many-class organization, admitting to its ranks farmers, self-employed artisans, professional men, and even employers who had once been wage-earners, in addition to unskilled and skilled workers. It refused to recognize the realities of the labor situation and ignored the fact that the mass of the workers had now come to constitute a permanent and stable class of wage-workers dependent for their existence upon the sale of their labor power; it still thought and operated in terms of the "producer", whether he was a factory hand or an artisan or even a working employer. With such an outlook it was but natural that the Knights of Labor should officially frown upon strikes, boycotts and other forms of economic action, although frequently forced to engage in them in practice. The salvation of the workers it sought in producers cooperation, land and money reform and other such panaceas. In a word, it was not at all a trade union movement in the modern sense of the term.

But conditions in the 1880's and 1890's demanded a modern trade union movement, in which the definite wage-labor status of the workers would be recognized, which would organize the workers independently of other classes, which would utilize to the full the economic weapons of boycott and strike and which would shun all middle class reform schemes and panaceas. The Knights remained obstinately wedded to their antiquated philosophy and program and so the new movement had to arise outside of and in opposition to them. This new movement was the American Federation of Labor. Definitely organized in its present form in 1886, with only 135,000 members as against the 700,000 of the Knights, the A. F. of L. completely superseded the latter in less than fifteen years. Why? Because the Knights clung with desperate folly to the dead past and so went down in defeat; the A. F. of L. proved ready to adapt its philosophy, program and methods, at least to some extent, to the new conditions of American industry and it survived.

Today the American Federation of Labor has reached a point where it finds itself in the same position that the

Knights were in fifty years ago. It has made a fetish of craft unionism at a time when conditions demand that the labor movement advance beyond craft unionism to industrial unionism. Will this decisive step forward, essential if organized labor is to survive, be taken by the A. F. of L. and within its official bounds or will it have to be accomplished through the launching of a new movement outside its limits? That depends entirely upon the leadership of the A. F. of L. It is up to them to decide whether the federation is to have a rebirth as a really modern labor organization able to cope with big business or whether it is to go down in rapid decay, giving way before a new labor movement ready and able to meet the challenge of the new conditions!

Today, after a little more than a year of existence, the C.I.O. already has fifteen international unions affiliated with it, including some of the largest and most effective in the country, embracing a membership of nearly two million. Within a period of seven months, over 125,000 steel workers have joined the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers under the impetus of the drive of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. The United Rubber Workers has increased its membership more than tenfold in one year, with over 25,000 enrolled in Akron alone. The United Electrical and Radio Workers Union has more than doubled its membership in nine months and is firmly established with company recognition in key plants of General Electric and Westinghouse. In about the same period, the United Automobile Workers has grown from 40,000 to well over 150,000 and has just emerged from a great, epoch-making struggle in General Motors' plants under C. I. O. leadership. And we need hardly call attention to such powerful organizations as the United Mine Workers, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers that form the backbone of the C.I.O.

In the short period of its existence, the C.I.O. has already become the recognized spokesman of all that is alive, vigorous and progressive in the ranks of American labor. All of the great strikes of the last few months — the strike of the shipbuilders at Chester, the Midland steel strike, the rubber work-

ers sit-down strike at Akron, the Bendix strike in Indiana, the glass workers strikes in various parts of the country, the great auto strike recently concluded — have been strikes of unions affiliated or associated with the C.I.O. The only important strike conducted by an unsuspended A. F. of L. union in this period was the seamen's strike and this the A. F. of L., at the Tampa convention, itself repudiated! In fact, while the C.I.O. is energetically at work, assisting the millions of wage earners in the big industries to obtain the benefits of unionism, while it is fighting on a dozen fronts against the combined powers of big business, the A. F. of L. leadership has virtually converted itself into an agency for deterring the workers from action and for denouncing and obstructing labor struggles, to the point even of open invitations to scabbery, as the action of certain craft union chiefs in the automobile strike shows! For the logic of the reactionary position held by the clique dominating the Executive Council is inescapable; it is the logic of utter self-destruction and, under its influence, the A. F. of L. is sinking ever deeper into the mire of futility and discredit.

The venomous hatred that the employers and the reactionary labor leaders feel for the C.I.O. has been turned in concentrated form upon John L. Lewis. Lewis is a "dictator", we are told, a "bully", a "despot" and what not. Such has always been the strategy of the employing class — to attempt to discredit the militant leaders of labor so as to demoralize the movement as a whole. But the facts speak for themselves in refutation of these slanders. Lewis is a strong man, of course, a man of great determination and power, but he has shown the ability to surround himself with associates who are themselves men of power and initiative — something no mere "bully" or "despot" could ever do! Yes, Lewis knows when and how to use the mailed fist, when and how to "bully" his opponents but, as he employs them, his force and resolution are real assets for the labor movement.

The great victory of the automobile workers in the General Motors strike, coming as the fruit of a magnificent forty-four day struggle, definitely places the C.I.O. at the head of American labor. In the eyes of the great masses of organized

workers and of those sections of the unorganized who are beginning to awaken to organizational consciousness, it is Lewis and the C.I.O. who represent the militant aspirations of trade unionism and are entitled to speak authoritatively in its name. Under the direct guidance of the C.I.O.; the first big breach has been made in the formidable open shop-company union front of big business; a gigantic corporation in a great mass-production industry has been forced to recognize a C.I.O. union and to deal with it as the agency of collective bargaining — as the sole agency in twenty big plants. Only the blind could fail to see the tremendous historical significance of this development and it is the blindness of desperation that has caused William Green to join the unspeakable George E. Boysen of the Flint Alliance and the editors of the most reactionary, labor-hating papers in pretending to regard the General Motors settlement as a "defeat" and "surrender". It is the sour-grapes attitude in its most contemptible form and it is especially shameful when it comes from the head of the A. F. of L. — who should certainly remember the nefarious "company union" agreement of 1934 and his own part in it. Fortunately, the pronouncements of President Green and the Executive Council have already lost much of their authority in the labor movement. Intelligent, wide-awake workers in whatever camp they may find themselves at the moment, as well as public opinion generally, are unanimous in recognizing the vast importance of the General Motors strike settlement as the first great victory wrested by organized labor from one of the most powerful combinations of big business in the country. It is the herald of a new day for labor!

As to the future, there can not be much doubt. The future of the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O. depends primarily upon the ability of each to meet the challenge of the new conditions in industry, and here the C.I.O. certainly has the decisive advantage. No labor movement today can have any vitality or claim to life unless it stands ready and able to absorb the millions of workers in the basic industries of the country — but experience has amply proved that organization can be extended to these industries only on the basis of industrial unionism. Tens of thousands of men and women are certain

to come pouring in from the rural areas to the main industrial centers just as soon as there is a more definite improvement in the economic situation. To assimilate them into the body of organized labor, to inspire them with its traditions and ideals, will become virtually a matter of life and death to the trade union movement, for unless organized labor is able to win the allegiance of these masses, they are only too likely to become pawns in the hands of the employers or victims of fascist demagoguery. But surely it is obvious that craft unionism can have no meaning for these factory hands and unskilled laborers; only industrial unionism can have any appeal to them or offer them anything significant in the way of labor organization. Only industrial unionism, moreover, is in a position to meet the deadly menace of company unionism, which has made such great headway under the NRA and since, and which has shown itself almost completely immune to the attacks of craft unionism.

The future belongs to industrial unionism and to the movement based upon it. This could hardly be brought out more clearly than in the following significant words of Dr. B. Hoffman, editor of one of the journals of the I. L. G. W. U.:

"In the long run a split would lead to a situation in which the new organization that would be formed would swallow up the old one, just as took place in the split of the Knights of Labor. The newly created organization at that time, the American Federation of Labor, succeeded in swallowing the old Knights of Labor because the new organization was better adapted to organize the workers of America under the circumstances and conditions of the time. And, should a split take place in the American trade union movement today, the new organization, created on the principle of industrial unionism, will be better adapted to organize the great masses of the workers in the mass production industries and would necessarily become the body of American organized labor."

For progressive elements in the trade union movement, the way is clear. They take their stand without reservation

for the C.I.O. They do so because the C.I.O. represents the future, and its program is the only one that can bring strength and victory to trade unionism. The progressives realize that the work the C.I.O. is now doing in spreading its ideas as well as in actual organization, is part and parcel of the job that they have always urged organized labor to undertake. The progressives stand by the C. I. O. because it really shows the way to sound unity in labor's ranks—unity based on genuine democracy and industrial unionism!

The implications of the conflict over industrial unionism reach far beyond even these issues. It is no accident that whatever progress the labor movement did make in the direction of political independence in the recent elections was made by the unions organized in Labor's Non-Partisan League so closely associated with the C. I. O. Nor is it an accident that from the C. I. O. unions there comes more of an understanding of the menace of fascism, of the danger of war and of the measures necessary to combat these twin evils, than is usually met with in American trade union circles. For the issue of industrial unionism, of such vital importance in itself, is at the same time but the expression of a new and broader outlook in the labor movement, of a philosophy embracing militancy, independent political action, an international perspective and many of the other ideas that progressives have championed for so many years.

III.

Socialists, Communists and the C. I. O.

IN THE working class movement of this country there are a number of labor political groups striving to inspire a deeper consciousness in the ranks of labor. It is interesting and instructive to examine the attitude of these groups towards the present crisis in the labor movement and the problems that emerge from it. From such an examination, the intelligent worker will be able to draw his own conclusions as to which of these tendencies offers labor most in the way of sound guidance and effective leadership.

The socialist movement is, at the present time, divided into two wings—the right wing, organized in the Social-Democratic Federation, and the left wing, in the official Socialist Party. The former, dominated by leaders to whom William Green and John P. Frey are American labor personified, have throughout been very cold, even hostile to the C. I. O. In their paper, the New Leader, they have followed more or less consistently a policy of rendering aid and comfort, as openly as possible, to the reactionary craft union chiefs of the Executive Council. When the controversy over industrial unionism first broke out at the Atlantic City convention in October 1935, the New Leader could find nothing better to do than to abuse John L. Lewis and minimize the gravity of the issue. In subsequent months, this paper contented itself with weeping copious tears over the split in labor's ranks, deliberately avoiding any serious analysis of its fundamental nature or of the problems involved. Behind the scenes, right wing socialist leaders have never ceased their petty intrigues to sow dissension in the ranks of

the C. I. O. under the cloak of striving for "peace" and "unity". When John P. Frey issued an open call to scabbery in the automobile strike, they gently reproved him for—making it public! "Had Mr. Frey made his communication a confidential one to his members in Cleveland no harm would have been done" (New Leader, January 16, 1937). Almost everywhere the right wing socialists have any influence in the trade union movement, they are using it, as directly as they can, to the advantage of the reactionary craft union clique now dominating the A. F. of L. Certainly the progressive sections of the labor movement have nothing to expect from them in the way of inspiration and leadership!

The left wing socialists in the Socialist Party have, on the whole, adopted a sound attitude towards the C. I. O. and the problems raised by the crisis in the labor movement; many socialists, too, are active in the industrial union movement and in the organization campaigns now under way. It is to be regretted, however, that the S. P. has not always proved able to carry out its policy consistently. At last year's convention of the United Textile Workers, for example, the socialists threw their support towards one whose attitude to the C. I. O. was more than ambiguous; they did not seem to realize that the "C. I. O. question" had become a primary touchstone of progressivism in the labor movement. In the ranks of the S. P., furthermore, there are elements (especially among the Trotskyites) who like to display their infantile "radicalism" by an attitude that there really is "no difference" between Lewis and Green and that the whole thing is just a "fake"!

The communist movement, too, is unfortunately divided into two wings. On general questions, the right wing communists of the official Communist Party have now come to adopt a position very much like that for which they themselves once criticized the socialists so severely. On the question of the C. I. O., the C. P. has, by and large, worked diligently, to-

gether with other progressives, for the advancement of the industrial union cause and the organization of the mass-production industries and has resolutely opposed the reactionary despotism of the Executive Council. But it cannot be overlooked that the Communist Party has exhibited neither the political clarity to see things as they are nor the political courage to formulate a clear perspective and policy. The leadership of the C. P. seem to think that, by refusing to face facts and call them by their proper names, they can conjure them out of existence. Thus, a few months ago, in the November 1936 issue of The Communist, one of the outstanding leaders of the C. P. rebuked the "Lovestoneites" for describing the emergence of the C. I. O. in opposition to the A. F. of L. as a necessary, progressive step to be compared with the emergence of the A. F. of L. in opposition to the Knights of Labor, but evidently he did not think it necessary to put forward any alternative analysis worthy of the seriousness of the situation. Subsequent events have amply shown whose judgment has been substantiated by the course of development!

Even in practise, the policy of the official Communist Party has been full of hesitation and confusion. At the American Federation of Teachers convention last August, leading C. P. members took what was perilously close to a "neutral" stand on the whole question. In the Unity Lodge No. 416 (Brooklyn) of the machinists' union, C. P. spokesmen actually found it possible to propose the endorsement of the slate headed by Arthur Wharton, president of the I. A. M., on the ground that he represented "progressive trade unionism" — Wharton, who is one of the inner clique of craft union die-hards on the Executive Council! Such are the penalties of opportunism, of the refusal to adopt a clear-cut perspective, without camouflage or equivocation.

The left wing elements in the communist movement, organized in the Communist Party (Opposition)—the so-called

"Lovestoneites"—have never hesitated to state their position on the present crisis in the labor movement directly and clearly and to carry it out in practical activity without fear or favor. More than a year ago, within a few months after the formation of the C. I. O., in fact, we made a thorough analysis of the situation and outlined a program of action, both of which have been entirely confirmed by experience. We say plainly: The labor movement finds itself in deep crisis. But it is a crisis of growth, of reorientation. It is a crisis marking readjustment to a new situation, to the new conditions of modern mass-production industry. A shift of the trade union movement from a craft to an industrial basis, a new orientation towards the masses of the workers in the basic industries, has been long overdue and is now a vital, an immediate task. This great task the C. I. O. has set out to accomplish—inside the A. F. of L. and within its bounds, if possible; outside the A. F. of L. and against it, if necessary. Therefore we support the C. I. O. all along the line—and we do not hesitate to say so, without lame apologies or vain regrets!

And we translate our theory into practice. Wherever we are active, whether in a C. I. O. or an A. F. of L. union, we strive vigorously for the same basic aim—to advance the cause of the C. I. O. and to overcome the sabotage and resistance of the craft union reactionaries. We are not adept at that species of double bookkeeping which makes it possible to be "for the C. I. O." and yet support Wharton as a "progressive". We hold it as self-evident that he who is for the C. I. O. has taken at least the first step towards progressive unionism, while he who is against it cannot be a progressive no matter what else he may claim to stand for. We realize fully how necessary it is to rally the masses of the workers in the A. F. of L. unions against the criminal policies of their leaders in the Executive Council but we do not therefore overlook the fact that today the main emphasis must be directed towards en-

ergetically pushing organization in the mass-production industries—for that, after all, will be decisive in the long run. We are ever on the alert to bring the question of trade union unity to the fore but we do so realistically, without falling victim to sentimental illusions or empty phrases, for we understand quite well that, under present conditions, sound unity can mean only the reunification of the divided labor movement on a higher level—on the basis of industrial unionism and democracy!

To the progressives in the unions we make this appeal: Lend your support and cooperation in the common task of building up a mighty and militant trade union movement capable of standing up against the combined forces of big business in this, the most powerful capitalist country of the world!

And to those workers who are already beginning to understand that our present system of capitalist private property, breeding wage-slavery, war and mass misery, must be made to give way to a new social order based on collective ownership of the means of production through the power of the workers, we appeal: Join our ranks and together let us strive for a mighty, united communist movement that will be able to achieve our great goal—a socialist America!

February 15, 1937

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